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State Pantheon of Greater Armenia: Earliest Sources*

The study of pre-Christian Armenian religion undoubtedly falls behind other branches of Armenology. This situation has historical grounds, a detailed study of which lies beyond our immediate concern. Obviously, research into religious matters could not develop normally in the USSR due to political reasons. Western Armenology, too, unfortunately did not manage to raise this field of scholarship to modern standards. These reasons have resulted in a situation in which almost all the works concerning the Armenian pantheon are outdated and in many aspects are also methodologically unacceptable.¹

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1 Till now, in certain respects the most comprehensive and systematic study of the Armenian pantheon is Gelzer 1896 (= Gelzer 1897). Richer in factual material, although methodologically more vulnerable, is Alishan 1895. G. Kapantsyan has attempted to demonstrate traces of many Ancient Eastern (Mesopotamian, Hurrian, and Hittite) theonyms in the Armenian language and beliefs: see especially Kapantsyan 1956: 267-327. An example of overestimation of the Iranian influence on the Armenian pantheon and heathen religion is Stakelberg 1901. The same idea is also predominant in many later works of Western Armenologists: see especially Russell 1987, EIr's numerous articles pertaining to Armenian themes, et al. It is necessary to note that Ališan, Gelzer, Stakelberg, and their contemporaries knew nothing, or almost nothing, about the history, language, culture, and religion of Urartu, as well as Anatolian and Hurrian states. Furthermore, before the Second World War, the European, mostly German, scholars engaged in Armenian studies were originally Iranologists, inclined to overestimate the "Aryan" Iranian element, which at first sight is evident in the cultures of Armenia and

Ancient Armenian gods figure under local and Greek names: Aramazd-Zeus, Anahit-Artemis, Vahagn-Heracles, Mihr-Hephaestus, Astlik-Aphrodite, Nanē-Athena, Tir-Apollo, and Baršamin (with no Greek identification). The local names are mainly of Iranian origin (Aramazd, Anahit, Vahagn, Mihr, and Tir), two are borrowed from Mesopotamia (Nanē and Baršamin), and one is native Armenian (Astlik).

Scholars have often explained the characters of the gods according to the etymologies of their names, and have considered the pre-Christian Armenian pantheon and religion to be mainly of Iranian origins, displaying only some local (native Armenian, Semitic, Hittite-Luwian, Hurro-Urartian) and Hellenistic traces. That is to say, it has been believed that borrowed characters figured under borrowed theonyms – a view which is methodologically unacceptable.

The mythological names do not always identify the mythological figures. Many Ancient Eastern gods were first identified with Mesopotamian and later with Greek gods, and were mentioned first by Sumero-Akkadian and later by Greek names, but they preserved their old local characters, features, and cults. In cuneiform inscriptions, there was a tradition to present, as far as it was possible, the gods of various peoples in Sumero-Akkadian ideographic forms (e.g., the West-Semitic Ba'al, the Hurro-Urartian Teššub-Teišeba, the Hittite-Luwian Tarhuntas, and the Hattic Taru were usually referred to as ^DIM or ^DU – “storm/ weather/ thunder god”), while Greek and Roman authors called the gods of other peoples by the names of their own gods (Zeus, Jupiter, etc.). For that reason, we do not know the native names of many Hittite, Hayasan, Scythian, Celtic,

the neighboring countries. The “pan-Iranian” approach of Iranologists, although deserving criticism, is in a certain sense natural: it is partly a result of ignorance in Armenology. The works of contemporary, especially Western, Armenologists, which steadily build on the preconceived tendency of searching for and finding only Iranian elements in the roots of Armenian culture, are a mere continuation of the historical inertia going back to the 19th and early 20th centuries. On the other hand, however, Kapantsyan's works revealing Ancient Eastern phenomena in Armenian culture are also methodologically vulnerable. For instance, in those works, the role of the Indo-European element in the Armenian language and culture is reduced to minimum, and Armenian is considered an “Asiatic” language.

and other gods mentioned in this way. In the Armenian sources, too, Armenian gods more often figure under their Greek names. It should be also noted that the characters of some Iranian gods, notwithstanding their Iranian names, were descended from Mesopotamian prototypes (Anāhitā, Tīri),² and others bore Mesopotamian influence. Furthermore, in the Hellenistic period, they were syncretized with Greek gods.

Even the adoption of Christianity, according to V.I. Abaev, in many respects may be regarded as simply a “terminological and onomastic revolution.”³ the cults of ancient gods continued under the names of Christian saints. And if Christianity, with its mighty organization and long dominance, and even in the case of developed and powerful states, was in its manifold manifestations just a “terminological and onomastic revolution,” what, then, could we say about religious influences and changes that had taken place in much earlier epochs?

One might state that the changes caused by the Iranian and Greek influences were also mainly terminological and onomastic. The theonyms and cultic terms changed, many of them became Iranian, but the figures and cults remained the same, or at least preserved numerous old features. The religion of Ancient Armenia, just as the whole culture, was multilayered, and an attentive study makes it possible to discover the cults of previous times both under Christian and pre-Christian, mostly Iranian, names.

For the purposes of the present study, it is first of all necessary to mention four main preconditions, which made the transposition of old mythological characters and cults on the new ones possible. Those are: 1) the compatibility or correspondence of at least some functions; 2) the same locus of the cult where the new worship was introduced on an old one (or the old cult was renamed); 3) coincidence or at least approximate simultaneity of the feast-days, and 4) assonance of the names.⁴

2 Boyce 1987: 76-77.

3 Abaev 1972: 322.

4 This list does not pretend to characterize all the mechanisms of borrowing new mythological names and figures and changing or preserving the old ones. When being transferred to new religions, gods with old names descend to the lower

The cults of most Armenian gods (Aramazd, Anahit, Mihr, Nanē, Baršamin) were centered in a northwestern extremity of Greater Armenia, in the districts of Daranaḡ, Ekeḡik‘, and Derjan of the province of Upper Armenia, the Acilisene of the classical sources (Arm. Ekeḡik‘ and surrounding territories). This area remained a very important religious center even after the adoption of Christianity: it became the family estate of Gregory the Illuminator who spread Christianity in Armenia. Of the western religious centers of Greater Armenia, only the united complex of the temples of Vahagn, Anahit, and Astḡik, in Tarawn, was relatively far from here. As to the eastern worship centers of state significance (Armawir, Bagaran, Bagawan, and Artašat), perhaps they partly originated from the old local cults of the Ararat Plain, and partly were secondary, a consequence of the location of the capital in the Ararat Plain. There had been other centers too, e.g., the cult of Aramazd and Astḡik in the province of Anjewac‘ik‘, which were of lesser importance than the mentioned state sanctuaries.

According to a legend recorded by Strabo, the Argonaut Armenius, the ancestor of the Armenians, and his companions had first settled in "Acilisene and Syspiritis, reaching Calachene and Adiabene" (Strabo XI.4.8; XI.14.12), i.e., Acilisene, the area of the uppermost streams of the Euphrates, had originally been the cradle of the Armenians. From there, they spread in the Armenian Highland and the neighboring territories. Most probably, this legend has some historical grounds. In the 15th-13th centuries BC, the territory of Acilisene was incorporated within the kingdom called Hayasa in Hittite sources. As the majority of scholars familiar with the issue believe, Hayasa played a central role in the formation and early history of the Armenians, and the Armenian self-appellation Hay is associated with Hayasa.⁵ Later on, other peoples ruled over

degree of epic heroes (see below), sometimes obtaining negative features. On this question, see in detail Petrosyan 2006b: 4-5.

- 5 N. Martirosyan (1924) was the first to speak about the Hayasa-Hay relationship. He was followed by K. Roth (1927), G. Kapantsyan (1931-33), P. Kretschmer (1932), A. Khachatryan (1933), et al. G. Kapantsyan has presented his view in a

the area, and it finally passed under Armenian domination in the early 2nd century BC. Acilisene was probably united with Greater Armenia one century later, in the time of Tigran the Great (Strabo XI.4.5; XI.12, 15). That is to say, according to Strabo, the mentioned territories had not even been a part of Greater Armenia before the 2nd-1st centuries BC.

Why did the kings of Greater Armenia locate the main cults of their state in a newly conquered extremity of their lands? Taking the legend told by Strabo into consideration, one could suppose that from earliest times, the gods of Upper Armenia had essential importance for the Armenians. Furthermore, based on the thesis that in the course of religious changes old mythological figures were renamed and preserved in the places of their cults, we might presume that the gods of Hayasa were the oldest prototypes of the Armenian pre-Christian gods in Acilisene. This, together with the Greek legend about the origins of the Armenians, is one of the strong arguments for the Hayasa-Armenia heredity.

Iranian theonyms in Armenia are known already from the Achaemenid and early Hellenistic times: in the inscription on a rock near Lake Van by Xerxes I (486-465 BC), Auramazda (the form of Ahura Mazda's name in Achaemenian inscriptions) is mentioned,⁶ and Μίθρας is referred to in a Greek inscription of the 2nd century BC at Armawir.⁷ However, the Armenian-Iranian theonyms that have come down to us were derived from the late Parthian forms Aramazd, Mihr,

monograph (Kapantsyan 1956: 5-259), and the Hayaša-Hay hypothesis has been supported by most experts in the origins of the Armenian people, as well as by numerous distinguished scholars, who have touched upon the issue: see, e.g., Tashyan 1934: 339-343; Acharyan 2004: 25 (posthumous edition); Manandyan 1944: 32-33; Manandyan 1984: 489-562; Piotrovsky 1946: 33-35; Melikishvili 1954: 85, 418; Yeremyan 1958; Georgiev 1958: 71; Bănăteanu 1961; Djahukian 1961; Djahukian 1988a; Toumanoff 1963: 59; Burney and Lung 1971: 179; Ivanov 1983: 30-33; Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1984: 913; G. Sargsyan 1992. I.M. Diakonoff was the only celebrated specialist familiar with the problem who did not accept this opinion: see Diakonoff 1984: 112 ff. For a critical survey of the theories on the ethnogenesis of the Armenians, see Petrosyan 2007b.

6 Kent 1953: 152-153.

7 See, e.g., Trever 1953: 83, 134.

and *Varhagn,⁸ so they cannot be traced back to the Auramazda, Miθra, and *Varθragna of the Achaemenian epoch. Thus, the Armenian pantheon that we know could have been shaped in the 2nd-1st centuries BC, under the first Artaxiads, and for the most part under Tigran the Great, as the state pantheon of the powerful and centralized Greater Armenia. It is noteworthy that the Armenian historical tradition, too, attributes to Artasēs and Tigran the establishment of the cults of gods by Iranian and Greek names and the erection of their statues in Greater Armenia, particularly in Acilisene (Movsēs Xorenac‘i II.12; II.14). This pantheon was to undergo some changes later, during the reign of the Arsacid dynasty in Armenia, in the 1st-3rd centuries AD.

Judging from the extant data, the mentioned eight gods formed the main cults of the pantheon of Greater Armenia in the pre-Christian period (Xorenac‘i refers to the erection of their statues, and Agat‘angelos narrates about the destruction of their temples). Other deities, too, are mentioned in old sources, such as Angel, Vanatur, Amanor, et al., but they cannot be regarded as equal to those eight gods.

Aramazd

Aramazd was considered the *ararič‘ erkni ew erkri* "creator of heaven and earth"⁹ (Agat‘angelos 68). In the inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings, too, Auramazda is regarded as the creator of heaven and earth.¹⁰ This is the common feature of those two gods. Aside from that, they are different (they both were called also "great" but this is characteristic of the great gods and does not provide a sufficient basis for generalization). The worship center of Aramazd was the fortress Ani of

8 This Parthian archetype of Aramazd is referred to from the 1st century BC (Greek Aramasdēs): see Meillet 1978: 117; the origin of the name Vahagn has been traced as follows: Vahagn < *Varhagn < Parthian Varhagn < old Iranian *Varθragna or *Vrθragna, which correspond to the Avestan Vərəθraγna.

9 The English citations from Agat‘angelos' History are from Thomson 1976, with some corrections.

10 Kent 1953: 137, 138.

the province Daranali, or Ani-Kamax, which is believed to have been mentioned as Kummaha from the mid-second millennium BC in Hittite sources.¹¹ Aramazd, like Zeus, had a thunderous nature: according to Xorenac'i (II.86), St. Nunē "destroyed the image of the thunderous (ampropayin) Aramazd"¹² in Mtskheta.¹³

In a Hittite inscription (KUB XXXVIII 12), there is a reference to the thunder god of Kummaha (ideogram ^{DU}). It was a significant worship center and this god was included in the list of cults of the Hittite official pantheon.¹⁴ The name of Kummaha is, obviously, inseparable from those of the cities Kumme/ Kummu and Kummanni/ Kummini of cuneiform sources, the worship centers of the Hurro-Urartian and late Hittite thunder god Teššub (Urat. Teišeba) (-*ni* and -*ha* are typical suffixes in the ancient toponyms of the region). The first one was in the Kashiari mountains, near Mount Ararat of Korduk' (Turk. Cudi), and the second one in Cappadocia, west of Malatia.¹⁵ Accordingly, the thunder god of Kummaha must have been a local variety of Teššub, who can be regarded as the oldest predecessor of the "thunderous" Aramazd.

- 11 See Kosyan 2002a: 225-226, with bibliography (the identification of Kamax with Kummaha has not been questioned by scholars). The fortress of Ani in Daranali is considered to have been the center of Armenia Minor in the 4th-1st centuries BC. After the 10th century AD, Ani is no longer referred to. Kamax is mentioned instead, also called Ani-Kamax, to distinguish it from the capital Ani (Hakobyan et al. 1988: 913). The toponym Kamax is first attested in the 7th century (among the participants of the universal council of 680, there was a bishop "of Daranali or Kamax," see Adontz 1908: 53, 364).
- 12 The English citations from Xorenac'i's *History* are from Thomson 1978, with some corrections.
- 13 The story concerns the Georgian god Armazi, the counterpart of Aramazd. For the Armazi-Aramazd relationship, see Gvelesiani 2006, with bibliography.
- 14 Kosyan 2002a: 235, 239. From another inscription (KUB LV 1), the god Pirua of Kummaha is known: see Kosyan 2002a: 233-235. It is noteworthy that Pirua is probably related to the Indo-European name of the thunder god (cf. Slav. Perunŭ); see Ivanov 1958: 110.
- 15 Kummaha is compared with the worship centers of Teššub by G. Kapantsyan, see Kapantsyan 1956: 50. For the aspects of the cults of those cities, their legends, etymology of the element kum-, see Petrosyan 2006b: 11ff., 59 ff.

Aramazd was also called "father of all the gods" (Agat'angelos 785). The burial site of ancient Armenian kings was in the fortress of Ani (Agat'angelos 785; P'awstos III.11, IV.24; Xorenac'i III.10; III.45). Consequently, Aramazd, the patriarch of gods and maybe also their king, was related to the royal family, whose members would join him in the other world. In the Greek version of Agat'angelos, Aramazd is always named Zeus, but his temple in Ani is attributed to Zeus' father, Cronus.¹⁶ Perhaps the translator has deemed it proper to connect the worship place of the father of gods, Aramazd, located near the royal tombs, with the father of gods Cronus, who was cast into the Tartarus. In general, it was possible for the supreme gods to be the rulers of the "three worlds," the heaven, the earth, and the netherworld. Aramazd's counterpart, the Greek Zeus was also considered to be the ruler of the netherworld, and Hades himself, as the god of netherworld, was a hypostasis of Zeus, one of the aspects of his complex figure.¹⁷

Thus, Aramazd combined the features of the god-creator, the father of gods, the thunder god, and the god of the other world. Probably, this complex figure of Aramazd was formed as a result of unification of several local prototypes (see below). Even the function of the creator of heaven and earth is characteristic of many supreme gods of the region (Sumero-Akkad. An(u), West Semitic El, et al.). So it is not excluded that one of the pre-Iranian prototypes of Aramazd had been endowed with this function.¹⁸

Kummaha was probably outside Hayasa, or was incorporated in it only during certain periods,¹⁹ but the cult in Kamax was inseparable from the cults in the neighboring regions of Upper Armenia, namely Ekefik' and Derjan, with which in ancient times it formed a unity and might have been a part of one ethno-cultural complex. The territories of

16 Langlois 1867, § 32.

17 MNM 1: 51.

18 For the prototypes of the character of Aramazd, see in detail Petrosyan 2006b.

19 Kosyan 2002a: 237:

both Ekelik' and Derjan had been within the borders of Hayasa, and the thunder god of Kummaha must have been very similar to Hayasa's thunder god or gods. Moreover, the fact that Kummaha was out of Hayasa does not necessarily mean that her god could not have been included, at least sometimes, in the pantheon of Hayasa. We could remember, as a parallel, that the worship centers of the two prime gods of the Urartian pantheon, Haldi and Teišeba, were located outside the borders of Urartu.

Anahit

The worship center of Anahit was the settlement of Erēz in the province of Ekelik' (also called Eriza, later Erzinka, Turk. Erzincan). In the Hittite epoch, Kumme and Kummanni were the centers of the cult of not only Teššub but also of his wife (the goddess Hebat).²⁰ In Greco-Roman sources, Kummanni is represented as Comana Cappadociae.²¹ The Cappadocian and the Pontic Comanas were famous for the cult of Artemis Tauropolos (Strabo, XII.2.3; XII.32, 36). According to Procopius of Caesarea (*De bello Gothico*, IV.5; *De bello Persico*, I.17), the Artemis of those cities was identical to the Armenian Anahit, and, as the Armenians had corroborated, those cities and cults were descended from the Anahit of the province Ekelik'. The Cappadocian Comana also had amazingly reminded him of Anahit's center in the province Ekelik'.

Artemis' epithet *Tauropovlo* is associated with the word *tau'ro* "bull" (probably: "drown by bulls," or "hunting bulls," subsequently reinterpreted as being "worshipped by the Taurians of Crimea"). The bull was the zoomorphic symbol of all the thunder gods of the region, and among them, of Teššub.²² Accordingly, Teššub's wife was represented as a cow.²³ Plutarch (*Lucullus*, 24) narrates that when Lucullus was enter-

20 Laroche 1976-77: 154; Haas 1994: 580.

21 Goetze 1940: 5 ff.; RGTC 6: 221.

22 In many Indo-European (Greek, Latin, Slavic, etc.) traditions, too, the bull was related to the thunder god; this was perhaps peculiar to the Indo-European mythology as well, see MNM 1: 203.

23 Diakonoff 1981a: 83.

ing Greater Armenia, the cows prepared for sacrifice were freely grazing on the eastern bank of the Euphrates: they were devoted to Artemis, i.e., Anahit, whom the locals held in the highest esteem among all deities.

Procopius (*De bello Gothico*, IV.5) and Eustathius (*Comment. ad Dionys.* 694) call Comana χρύση "golden." This epithet is an important characteristic of the goddess and her cult. Anahit's statue was golden, and she was called *oskemayr* "golden-mother," *oskecin* "golden-born," and *oskehat* "golden-built" (Agat'angelos 786, 809).

Aramazd, as previously stated, was regarded as the father of the other gods, among them, Anahit (Agat'angelos 53, 785). But there was also another belief: in the Armenian Menology (*Yaysmawurk'*), Anahit is mentioned as the wife of Aramazd, and in one of the translations of the "Hellenizing school," the name of Zeus' wife Hera is translated as Anahit.²⁴ The feasts of Aramazd and Anahit were also united: they were celebrated on the New Year (Nawasard 1 = August 11) and the following days.²⁵ Thus, the conception of the couple Aramazd-Anahit seems to be more ancient.

The name Anahit goes back to the Iranian Anāhitā. The latter is the only anthropomorphic divine figure in ancient Iranian religion, and her origin is obviously non-Iranian. It is even possible that her name, too, has non-Iranian roots. In any case, this figure was created under the influence of the great goddesses of the countries conquered by the Iranians, especially of the Mesopotamian Ištar.²⁶ It is interesting to note that Artemis, with whom the Iranian Anahit was often identified, is a goddess of Asia Minor, according to one opinion, probably of Hurro-Urartian

24 Muradyan 1995: 154, 157.

25 After founding the St. Karapet church, Gregory the Illuminator "determined that every year there should be assembly of the whole people and a royal feast, at the first day of the month Nawasard, which is August 11. Because on that day the Armenians, while they were idolaters, had celebrated [the feast of] Aramazd and Anahit" (*Yaysmawurk'* 1834: 72). On the occasion of the Holy mother's feast on Nawasard 15, it is said that on that day Gregory the Illuminator "destroyed the female image of Anahit, the wife of Aramazd, and abolished their filthy feast."

26 See, e.g., Boyce 1987: 76; Rak 1998: 448; Elr. I: 1005 f.

origin.²⁷ Strabo (XI.14.16) stresses that Artemis-Anahit was especially worshipped by the Armenians, in the province of Ekelik' and elsewhere. Even the noblest Armenians dedicated their daughters to her, and they married only after having prostituted for a long time in her temple. In the Arsacid period, when the Parthian influence strengthened, the cult of Anahit was probably transformed. Agat'angelos (53) narrates that king Trdat represented her as *mayr amenayn zgastuteanc* "mother of all virtues" and *cnund mecin arin Aramazday* "offspring of the great and manly Aramazd." This character is comparable with the Iranian Anahita and the Greek Artemis, but not with the Armenian Anahit described by Strabo.²⁸

Vahagn

Vahagn is a complex character. In the History of Agat'angelos, he figures as one of the great Armenian gods, whereas according to Xorenac'i (I.31), he was the third son of king Tigran. Vahagn was usually identified with Heracles, but, rarely, also with the Sun-Apollo.²⁹ The divine triad Aramazd, Anahit, and Vahagn mentioned in king Trdat's command (Agat'angelos 127) corresponds to the Iranian triad Auramazda, Anahita, and Mithra (figuring in the inscriptions of Artaxerxes II), where the Iranian solar Mithra is replaced by Vahagn. In the ancient religious systems of the Armenian Highland, the solar god being the third is characteristic of the Urartian and perhaps of the Hayasan pantheons (see below).

Vahagn was a valiant warrior god (cf. king Trdat's words: *k'ajū'tiwn*

27 Ivanov 1999. For the relationship of the cult of Artemis with Asia Minor (viz. Lydia and Lycia), see also Burkert 1985: 149.

28 For the figure and worship of Anahit, see also Melik-Pashayan 1963; Petrosyan 2006b: 42 ff., with bibliography.

29 Cf., e.g., in the Armenian version of Philo of Alexandria's On the Decalogue: "For some call... the fire Hephaestus and the sun Vahagn" (Apollo in the Greek original); cf. also in a later writing called *Tōnakan* ("Festal"): "Some worshiped the sun and called it Vahagn." For this identification in old Armenian translations, see Muradyan 1995: 155, 157.

hasc'ē jez i k'aġēn Vahagnē "may valor come to you from valiant Vahagn," Agat'angelos 127). He was also *višapak'al* "dragon-slayer" who "fought and overcame dragons" (Xorenac'i I.31).

The name of the Avestan counterpart of Vahagn, *Vərəθraϋna*, is a theonym used also as an epithet for the Savior, Haoma, the hero Thraetaona, and his weapons. In ancient India, *Vṛtrahan* "slayer of the dragon Vṛtra" was the etymological parallel of the Iranian *Vərəθraϋna*. It was the usual epithet of the thunder god Indra, but everything victorious by nature was also called so: e.g., the gods Agni, Soma, and Sarasvati. Based on this parallel, Vahagn has frequently been considered the counterpart of Indra-Vṛtrahan.³⁰ But *Vərəθraϋna* is not a dragon-slayer, and this direct Armenian-Indian juxtaposition ignoring the Iranian facts is methodologically incorrect.³¹ Two circumstances emphasize that Vahagn was a solar god: 1. The Christian heir of Vahagn's character was John the Baptist (St. Karapet "Precursor," whose church was constructed near the destroyed temple of Vahagn), who has obtained features of the sun god in Eastern Christian traditions,³² 2. According to an archaic Armenian legend, the dragons are slain by the sun.³³

The beginning of the hymn of Vahagn, *erknēr erkin, erknēr erkir, / erknēr ew covn cirani* "labored the heaven, labored the earth, / labored, too, the purple sea" (Xorenac'i I.31) is regarded as a striking example of Indo-European poetry.³⁴ That is to say, the origin of at least this component of Vahagn's character is considered to be native Armenian. The best parallels are found in old Indian Vedas:³⁵ according to a hymn (*Rig-Veda* X.45.1), the fire god Agni is also born in heaven, on the earth, and in the sea (in accordance with these locations, he figures as lightning, sacrifice

30 M. Emin was the first to express this view: see Emin 1896.

31 Toporov 1977: 99.

32 MNM 1: 553.

33 Srvandztyants 1978: 69.

34 Ivanov 1969; Ivanov 1983.

35 For the first and the best discussion of this relationship, see Emin 1896: 82-83.

fire, and the sun respectively).³⁶ By these features, Agni is identical with Vahagn, whom scholars have regarded as the god of the sun, fire, and thunder. Thus, Vahagn, like Agni, perhaps combined these functions.³⁷ On the other hand, the features of Vahagn in the hymn correspond to the characteristics of a Sumerian demon, Asag, and this fact may testify to old contacts between the Indo-Europeans and the Sumerians.³⁸

Vahagn was worshipped in the district of Tarawn, at a temple complex situated on Mt. K'ark'ē. This toponym displays a clear similarity to the names of sanctuaries related to Indo-European dragon-fighting gods (cf., e.g., Krakow).³⁹ Moreover, Tarawn may correspond to the name of the Hattian-Hittite thunder god Taru/ Tarawa (possibly, of Indo-European origin: see below). This perhaps means that Vahagn was also the heir of Taru/ Tarawa. It is also probable that Vahagn continued the cults of the gods of thunder (Teššub), and/or the sun, of the oldest land in this region, Šubria.⁴⁰

On the other hand, the figure of Vahagn is comparable with the Indo-European "third hero" (he was the third member of the above-mentioned mythological triad, his hymn was tripartite, he was worshipped in a tripartite temple complex, together with Anahit and Astlik, the 27th (3×3×3) day of the month was dedicated to him, etc). Taking all these facts into consideration, V.N. Toporov has assumed that Vahagn could have been descended from the Hayasan god Terittitunni, the first part of whose name is comparable with the Indo-European root **trei-* "three."⁴¹

36 Nagy 1990: 99 ff.

37 See Areshian 1992: 7 ff.; Petrosyan 2002 : 34 ff.

38 Petrosyan 2002: 39; Petrosyan 2003: 198-202.

39 Ivanov and Toporov 1976: 123; Petrosyan 2002: 153 ff.

40 Hmayakyan 1990: 43 f., 53, 118; Petrosyan 2002: 132.

41 Toporov 1977: 105.

Mihr

The epic heirs of Mihr are Mher the Elder and Mher the Younger of the epic *Daredevils of Sasun*. At the end of the epic, Mher the Younger enters the "Door of Mher" in the rock of Van; in the future, he will be born again from there. The "Door of Mher" is a spacious Urartian inscription engraved on the rock, where the gods of the Urartian pantheon and the sacrifices to them are listed. At the beginning of the inscription, it is said that this "gate," i.e., the inscription written on the flat rectangular surface, cut on the rock is dedicated to the god Haldi⁴² (such "Gates of Haldi" are the most widespread Urartian cultic buildings).⁴³ According to I.M. Diakonoff, this undoubtedly means that, in ancient Armenia, Haldi was identified with Mithra-Mihr. The cult of Mithras, the western Mithra, in the form it had reached Rome, had very little in common with the Iranian Mithra, except the name. All the main features of the Roman Mithras (his birth from a rock, his worship in wall-niches or caves, his relation to the lion, etc.) can be followed eastward to Haldi but not further.⁴⁴

The Armenian Mihr was identified as fire and Hephaestus.⁴⁵ This identification is not characteristic of the Iranian Mihr and is unique to the Armenian god. In the votive shield of the Upper Anzaf fortress, Haldi is depicted with the circular burst of flame that springs from his body,⁴⁶ which allows regarding him, too, as a god of fire. The temple of Mihr was in the village Bagayarič "village of bag" (Iran. *bag-* "god") of the province of Derjan. Apparently, this province was dedicated to Mihr, as the neighboring provinces of Ekeḫik' and Daranali were dedicated to Anahit and Aramazd respectively. In Derjan, a village called *Xaltoy arič*

42 KUKN 38, 1-2.

43 Hmayakyan 1990: 67.

44 Diakonoff 1983b; Petrosyan 2006d.

45 In a shorter Greek version of Agat'angelos (the *Vita Gregorii*), Mihr is identified as Dionysus, see Garrite 1946, § 115.

46 Belli 1999: 37-41, fig. 17.

"village of Xalt" is known east of Bagayarič. It was there that the tribe *Xaltik* of Armenian sources, Greek *Chaldaioi*, lived. This ethnonym could have been associated with the theonym Haldi (to read: *Xaldi*). Accordingly, Xaltoy arič could have been attributed to the early local predecessor of Mihr. This is in full concordance with the identification of Haldi with Mher at the rock of Van, which means that, if in southern Armenia Mihr-Mher was identified with Haldi, in the northwest of the country he was associated with the homophonic onomastic element *xalt*. All this hint to the ancient, pre-Iranian roots of the Armenian Mihr.⁴⁷

Tir/Tiwr

The figure of the Iranian Tīr(i) goes back to the Babylonian Nabu, the scribe of the supreme god Marduk, associated with the planet Mercury.⁴⁸ The Armenian Tir is also mentioned as *dpir gitut'ean k'rmac* "scribe of the learning of the priests" and *grič Ormzdi* "writer (= secretary) of Ormizd" (in Armenian sources, Aramazd is rarely referred to by his later, Sassanian name Ormizd). The temple of Tir was near Artasat, at a place called Erazamoyrn, and his cult is characterized as *erazac'oyc' erazahan* "dream-displaying (and) dream-interpreting" (Agat'angelos 778).

In Armenia, Tir was identified with the Greek Apollo. His statue at the temple of Artasat was transferred from the first capital of Armenia Armawir, where it was known as the statue of the sun-Apollo (Xorenac'i II.8, 12, 49, 77). This is characteristic for the Armenian tradition. In Iran, it was Mithra that was identified with Apollo, and in the pantheon of Commagene (nearly identical to the Armenian), too, it was Helios-Mithra that was identified with Apollo and Hermes.

Thus, the Armenian Tir, unlike the Iranian god bearing the same name, had features of a sun god. A view has been expressed that Tir, also occurring in the form Tiwr, originated from the Indo-European theonym

47 Petrosyan 2006d: 229.

48 Boyce 1987 : 77.

**deiw-*.⁴⁹ Tiwr is indeed inexplicable as an Iranian loanword. The identification of Tir with Apollo is an additional argument for the origin of the form Tiwr from **deiw-* (the latter was the god of the sunny sky and the sun itself).⁵⁰ The solar functions of both Tir and Vahagn perhaps witness to the complicated character of the gods of the Armenian pantheon (cf., e.g., the figures of Apollo and Helios as the sun gods).

The characteristics of the Armenian Tir also resemble Hermes, the god of the planet Mercury. Being the transporter of the souls of the dead to the other world, Hermes was also the transmitter of dreams (*Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, 14), while at the moment of death the human soul withdraws like a dream (Hom. *Od.* XI.222). No similar beliefs connected with the Iranian Tīr(i) are known. Taking into consideration the comparatively insignificant Greek influence on the Armenian pantheon, one should think that this Armenian-Greek parallel was not a result of direct Greek influence but of some other factors (e.g., of areal relations or of common heritage).

Nevertheless, the scribe function and association with Hermes of the Armenian Tir and the Iranian-Mesopotamian Tīr-Nabu correspond to each other. This shows that the early Armenian solar **Tīw-*, under the strong Iranian influence, was probably identified with the Iranian homophonous Tīr and brought into correspondence with his character.

In the context of Armenian folklore, the scribe/writer (*grič*') god should be related with *Grol* "Writer," the angel of fate and death, who writes the book of fate, and who was identified with the Christian Archangel Gabriel.⁵¹ The latter plays an important role in the epic tradition. In the *Daredevils of Sasun*, he takes away the soul of Mher the Elder, and then fulfills the punishment of Mher the Younger, making him heirless. One may even state that, at the end of the epic cycle, the battlefield remains to the Archangel Gabriel. The sources of the Writer's figure are

49 Aghayan 1974: 148; see also Kocharyan 2005: 183-186.

50 Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1984: 793.

51 See especially Harutyunyan 2000: 404-409.

traced back to the Urartian fourth god Hutuini, whose name can be connected with the Hurrian root *hute* "to write," cf. the names of the Hurrian goddesses of fate, Hutena and Hutellura⁵² (in early Mesopotamia, the scribes of the other world were female figures). Hutuini, too, was probably related to the world of death. It is noteworthy that the fourth goddess of the Urartian pantheon, who may be regarded as the consort of Hutuini,⁵³ is called Aui "Netherworld."⁵⁴

Nanē

The temple of Nanē was in the village T'ıl of the province Ekelık', facing the village Eriza, the center of the cult of Anahit, on the opposite bank of the river Gayl. The proximity of the sanctuaries might have also reflected some relations between the two figures. The cult of the goddess Nanaya, from whose name the Armenian Nanē is derived, was known in ancient Mesopotamia, and, subsequently, also in Syria and Iran, where it survived until the Sasanian epoch. The goddess Nana is also known from ancient Mesopotamia, and, probably, these homophonous names later were confused. Both theonyms may be of Sumerian origin.⁵⁵

Recalling the identification of mythological figures with the deities of the previous epoch localized in the same sites, the name T'ıl of the settlement of Nanē can now be discussed. It is a Semitic loan-word in Armenian, meaning "hill," cf. Akkad. *Tillu* frequently occurring in the ancient toponyms of the region. In Armenian sources, the word *t'ıl* is used only for "the hills made by Šamiram."⁵⁶ The latter, Greek Semiramis, is one of the central ancient pre-Iranian mythological characters of the Armenians and other peoples of the region (see below). One may presume that Nanē figures as the heiress of Semiramis. It is interesting to

52 Hmayakyan 1990: 47-48.

53 Hmayakyan 1990: 26.

54 For this interpretation of Aui, see Meshchaninov 1978: 71-72.

55 Leick 1991: 124-125; MNM II: 197.

56 For the sources, see Acharyan 1973: 182-183.

note that, according to Strabo (XII.3.37), the city of Zela in Pontus was "fortified on a mound of Semiramis, with the temple of Anāitis, who is also revered by the Armenians." So, there, Semiramis was the predecessor of the local figure of Anahit.

Baršamin

Baršamin's temple was in the village T'ordan, not far from the center of Aramazd, Ani-Kamax. Owing to the close location of the worship centers, there also could have been some connections between the figures and cults. This is the only Armenian god not mentioned by a Greek name in Armenian sources or in the Greek version of Agat'angelos' *History*.⁵⁷ His name goes back to the West Semitic *Ba'al Šamin* "Lord of Heaven." Agat'angelos (784) calls him *spitakapar* "of white glory, gloriously adorned with white," and Xorenac'i writes (II.14) that it was king Tigran who brought his statue, which was "embellished with ivory, crystal, and silver," from Mesopotamia to T'ordan. However, as we shall see, the West Semitic Ba'al and perhaps his female counterpart, too, are mentioned in this region already from the mid-second millennium BC, and the erection of Baršamin's statue here must have been based on an old local cult (in the same way as the erection of the Greek statues of Aramazd, Mihr, and Nanē in this region must not have denied but developed the oldest local cults and endow them with Hellenistic traits). In the Armenian ethnogonic myth, Baršamin figures as Baršam, the adversary of Aram, the ancestor of the Armenians (Xorenac'i I.14). Xorenac'i says that after he was killed by Aram, the Syrians deified him. The opposition of the epic Aram and Baršam would allude to the opposition of Aramazd and Baršamin on the divine level (see below).⁵⁸

57 However, the god of T'ordan appears as Rhea in *Vita Gregorii* (Garrite 1946, § 108). Accordingly, some scholars identify Baršamin as a goddess, see Hako-byan 2001: 147; Palanjyan 2005: 189-190.

58 For Indo-European associations of this myth, see Petrosyan 2007a.

Astlik

The main center of Astlik was located on the slope of Mount K'ark'ē, where she was worshipped together with Vahagn and Anahit, in a triadic temple complex (Agat'angelos 809). She was identified with Aphrodite. Astlik, like Anahit and Nanē, may be regarded as an incarnation of one of the aspects of the mother-goddess.

Among the gods of the Armenian pantheon, Astlik is the only one whose name is of Armenian origin: cf. *Astlik* "planet Venus," the hypocoristic form of astl "star" (Indo-European **Haster/l-*). In the 19th century, G. Hofmann expressed an opinion that Astlik is a calque of the Syrian *Kaukabta* "the (female) star." This view has been widely cited.⁵⁹ Indeed, Astlik is inseparable from the Syrian, but also from the Mesopotamian and Hurrian-Anatolian goddesses. The first of them is the Sumerian Inanna (= the Akkadian Ištar). Inanna/ Ištar is a complex figure, having also incorporated in herself the features of the Hurrian goddess Šauška. Both by name and by functions, she corresponds to the Armenian Astlik: both of them are goddesses of love and motherhood, personifications of the planet Venus.

There exist various opinions concerning Ištar: 1. Ištar's prototype, the Semitic **attar*, probably signified the planet Venus with its two aspects: morning (male) and evening (female);⁶⁰ 2. In Eastern Semitic, this root meant "goddess" (in general), in West Semitic it was the name of a particular goddess, and in Southern Semitic, of a particular god;⁶¹ 3. The Semitic **attar* and the Indo-European **Haster-* "star" are inseparable from each other: often the Indo-European root was regarded as borrowed, but perhaps the Semitic forms were borrowed from the Indo-European, because the direction of borrowing from "star" to "deified star" seems more probable.⁶²

59 Gelzer 1897: 77-78; Abeghian 1985: 244-245; Kapantsyan 1956: 310; Acharyan 1944: 232. EI^r. II: 441.

60 Leick 1991: 96.

61 MNM I: 595; Diakonoff: 1982: 20-21.

62 Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1984: 875, 967. cf. Mallory and Adams 1997: 87, 543.

The Indo-European **Haster-* goes back to the root **Hās-* "burn" with the suffix **-ter-*. Ištar's counterparts, as mentioned above, figure in Semitic traditions both as female (West Semitic Astartē) and male deities (West Semitic Astar(u), Yemeni Astar). It is interesting that the same duality occurs in Armenia too: in one variant of the *Daredevils of Sasun*, Astlik is a king, the grandfather of Sanasar and Baldasar, the first heroes in the family of daredevils, while in other variants, *Paron* ("Mister") Astlik is the relative and adversary of David or Mher, fighting them and getting killed. This Astlik is in some respect comparable to the Ugaritan Astar (14th-13th centuries BC). The latter was the opponent of Ba'lu, whereas the god of lightning and thunder Ba'lu is comparable with David and Mher, the owners of the "lightning sword."

Paron Astlik is an igniferous celestial hero who, while fighting, pours fire from the sky on his adversary.⁶³ His relationship with fire and burning is not obvious: it is revealed only in the Indo-European etymology of his name. The male figure of Paron Astlik evidently cannot be traced back to the Syrian goddess Kaukabta, while his fire-pouring character is to be connected with the Indo-European etymology of his name, which means that this figure is very old. The Armenian origin of Astlik is also corroborated by many Armenian toponyms derived from her name⁶⁴ (toponyms derived from other pre-Christian theonyms are very rare). Consequently, this theonym, notwithstanding its Semitic associations, cannot be regarded as a mere calque of Kaukabta.

The Gods of Commagene

The Armenian Aramazd, Mihr, and Vahagn correspond to the gods of Commagene – Zeus-Oromasdes, Apollo-Mithras, and Herakles-Artagnes – whose gigantic statues were erected by King Antiochus of Commagene (1st century BC) on Mt. Nemrud. The inscription about the

63 For this figure, see Harutyunyan 1999: 398.

64 For such toponyms, see Srwandztyants 1978: 47-48; Hakobyan et al. 1986: 344-346.

gods also refers to "all-nourising fatherland Commagene" – the land is mentioned instead of the goddess Anahita. The Urartian name of Commagene, Qumaha (Assyr. Kummuhu), is identical with the Hittite Kum-maha, predecessor of Kamax, cult center of Aramazd. Thus, the whole country appears to be a sanctuary of the thunder god, and one might suppose that Oromasdes, like Aramazd, was Teššub's heir. Commagene was once part of the Armenian kingdom of Cop'k', and the ruling dynasties of Commagene and Armenia were of the same origin.⁶⁵ Probably, in the 1st century BC the Armenian gods were partly identical to the gods of Commagene. However, it is necessary to note that Aramazd is not identical to Oromasdes, who is closer to the Pahlavi Ōhrmazd, and Mithras and Artagnes are more similar to the early Iranian Miθra and *Varθragna. Moreover, unlike the Armenian Mihr-Hephaestus, the Mithras of Commagene was identified with Helios, Apollo, and Hermes. Thus, the Iranian theonyms of Commagene were more archaic, and the figures of these gods were closer to their Iranian counterparts.

The Pantheon of Urartu

The pantheon of Urartu, the state which for the first time united the Armenian Highland under one crown, is mainly known from the inscription on the "Door of Mher" (late 9th century BC), where about fifty theonyms and many sanctities are listed. One of the essential features of the pantheon is the exclusive emphasis on the cult of the supreme god Haldi and the joint reference to the triad of the great gods – Haldi, Teišeba, the thunder god, and Šiwini, the sun god – in various formulas. These gods were worshipped, probably together with their wives, in Ardini-Musasir, Kumenu (both in the southern extremity of the Armenian Highland), and Tušpa (Van) respectively.⁶⁶ The fourth god was Hutuini.

As seen above, Mher of the Daredevils of Sasun originated from Haldi, and Groł/ Gabriel, another hero of the epic and folklore, origi-

65 See on Commagene Tiratsyan 1956; Sargsyan 1966: 5 ff.

66 For the pantheon of Urartu, see Hmayakyan 1990.

nated from Hutuini. Sanasar, the first owner of the lightning sword and the heir of the thunder god, most probably originated from the Teššub of Šubria, the country which in Urartian times included Sasun and neighbouring territories.⁶⁷ The Armenians called Van "the city of Šamiram," "built by Šamiram," while in Urartu it was called Tušpa and was the worship center of the goddess Tušpuea, the wife of the sun god, which testifies to the heredity Tušpuea-Šamiram. One of the two historical prototypes of the mythical Šamiram/ Semiramis was Nak'ia, the wife of the Assyrian king Sennacherib.⁶⁸ She directly corresponds to Covinar, the progenitress of the daredevils of Sasun, the wife of Senek'erim (= Sennacherib). Thus, the great gods of the Urartian epoch survived in the epic tradition of the south of Armenia.

There are significant similarities and differences between the pantheons of Greater Armenia and Urartu. Haldi's heir Mher, in the Armenian context, is descended from Mihr: this hints to a correspondence between Haldi and Mihr. Aramazd, with his thunderous character and the name of his sanctuary (Ani-Kamax < Kummaha), corresponds to the Teššub-Teišeba of Kumme (= Urart. Qumenu). Vahagn, identified with the sun, is comparable with Šivini, and Tir, as a scribe and writer, with Hutuini. Anahit is mentioned as the wife of Aramazd, Astlik is Vahagn's mistress, and, in the *Daredevils of Sasun*, the old Nanē is mentioned as Mher's former mistress. This makes it possible to identify the three great goddesses of the Armenian pantheon as the partners of the three great gods, which is also characteristic of the structure of the Urartian pantheon. However, Mihr cannot pretend to the role of the supreme god. The hierarchy of the great Armenian gods can be reconstructed as Aramazd, Vahagn, and Mihr, i.e., there is a change of roles if compared with the Urartian model. The origins of some Urartian theonyms may

67 For Sanasar as the epicized thunder god, see Abeghian 1966: 414-418; Abeghian 1975: 72-73. For the relationship between Teššub and Sanasar, see Petrosyan 2002: 21, 65.

68 Lewy 1952.

be Armenian,⁶⁹ but the theonyms of the Armenian pantheon come from post-Urartian times and they do not have Urartian parallels. Besides, and this is very important, the places of worship do not correspond, and the great Armenain gods in fact cannot be directly identified with the Urartian deities. Their actual heirs figure as epic personages in the *Daredevils of Sasun*.

Thus, the essential common feature of the Armenian and Urartian pantheons is structural and functional: groups of three great gods (perhaps with their female partners), who, although in different sequences and with different locations, correspond to one another. These are followed by fourth "writer" gods (Hutuini and Tir).

The Pantheon of Hayasa

The pantheon of Hayasa is presented in a Hittite inscription, which is perhaps a fragment of an agreement between Hittite and Hayasan kings (KUB XXVI 39 IV, 26).⁷⁰ Gods of fourteen "cities" are mentioned, some of them more than once (especially the thunder god referred to by the ideogram ^DU).

The god U.GUR of Hayasa and the goddess INANNA are in the first place. They occupy the first line and are clearly separated from other gods (the following line is left blank). This is a couple of great gods: the patriarch of the gods and his wife. Their names are written in ideograms, i.e., the local gods have been brought into correspondence with the Mesopotamian U.GUR and INANNA. U.GUR represents the god Nergal and INANNA is the Sumerogram of the mother goddess (= Akkad. Ištar). Probably, U.GUR was originally the name of Nergal's sword (= Akkad. Uqur, imperative of the verb "destroy"): it was deified as Nergal's "vezir."⁷¹ After the Old-Babylonian period (early second

69 Djahukian 1986.

70 For the publications of the inscription, see, e.g., Forrer 1931: 6; Kapantsyan 1956: 88; V. Khachatryan 1971: 148; Haas 1986: 24. For a detailed discussion of the inscription, see Kosyan 2005.

71 Lambert 1973: 356.

millennium BC), he was identified with Nergal and became a spelling of Nergal. Nergal was an ancient north-Mesopotamian god related to death and war. He was the lord of the other world, and, later on, his cult also spread southward and westward.⁷²

In Hittite and Luwian sources, there are two single references on the cult of U.GUR in the cities of Halputilin and Zihila, whereas the U.GUR of Hayasa is referred to often (KBo IV 13 ii 21, iii 7, iv [3], 24, vi 33+; KUB X 82.5; XIX 128 ii 10, vi 19; KUB XXVI 39 iv 26; IBoT III 15 I 6-7).⁷³ This demonstrates that among the lands under the influence of the Hittite empire, Hayasa was the center of the cult of U.GUR.

The name of the third Hayasan god, of which only the last part, *š/t-an-nu-uš*, survives, according to one opinion, may be Izzıştanuṣ,⁷⁴ i.e., a Hittite form of the name of the Hattian sun god Eṣtan (possibly, from Ezzi Eṣtan, "god of the kind/good sun").⁷⁵ Although this reconstruction of the name is speculative, it is interesting to note that, if it is correct, the first three Hayasan gods become comparable with the Armenian triad Aramazd, Anahit, and Vahagn (supreme god, mother goddess and sun god). Thus, perhaps, the first prototype of the triad had been Hayasan, and only later did it obtain Iranian names.

In Hittite-Hattian tradition, from the mid-second millennium the Mesopotamian Nergal/ U.GUR was identified with the Hattian god Šuli(n)katte "king (of) Šuli."⁷⁶ Šulikatte was believed to be the father of the Hattian thunder god Taru, whose name occurs as Tarawa in the Hittite sources. The sixth god of the Hayasan pantheon, Tarumu (Ta-a-ru-u-mu-uš), is perhaps associated with Taru/ Tarawa.⁷⁷ As mentioned above,

72 For Nergal, see RLA 9: 215-226.

73 Van Gessel 1998: 839.

74 V. Khachatryan 1971: 148.

75 Cf. Puhvel 1984: 468.

76 Haas 1994: 367, 599.

77 See Djahukian 1961: 378; Djahukian 1988a: 75 (according to him, Taru-muwa > Tarumu- "Taru's strength"). We could also note that in the cuneiform names of the region, sometimes the w/m alternation occurs.

it is possible that the name of the province Tarawn, where the worship of Vahagn was centered, was also connected with Taru/ Tarawa.⁷⁸ According to Xorenac'i (II.8), the eponymous ancestor of the ancient rulers of Tarawn was Slak'. This name has been regarded as a reminiscence of Šulikatte.⁷⁹ The eponym-toponym relation Slak'-Tarawn is quite comparable with the genealogy Šulikatte-Tarawa, and one could deduce that we are dealing here with an ancient mythological complex, which later on was transformed into the genealogy of the local princely house.

The eighth Hayasan god was Terittitunni (Te-ri-it-ti-tu-u-ni-iš), who has been etymologized by G. Kapantsyan and G. Djahukian from the Indo-European root **trei-* "three,"⁸⁰ while V. Toporov, as stated above, has considered him as a possible predecessor of Vahagn. One more argument can be presented for the latter opinion. The temple of Vahagn is mentioned as the "eighth" (Agat'an-gelos 809), which means that perhaps here, too, the Armenian and Hayasan pantheons share a common structural feature.

The eleventh god of the Hayasan pantheon, Bāлтаik (Ba-al-ta-ik), may correspond to the West Semitic Ba'alat "lady," the feminine form of Ba'al / Ba'lu, one of the names of Astarte, possibly, with the diminutive-hypocoristic suffix of Indo-European origin *-ik*. It is noteworthy that a similar form with the same suffix *-ik* is Aštik, the Armenian counterpart of Astarte/ Ba'alat.

No direct data about Hayasan myths survive. However, in a late Hittite source (14th-13th centuries BC), a West Semitic myth concerning this area is narrated. According to that myth, the goddess Ašertu, i.e. Astarte-Ba'alat, wife of the supreme god Elkunirša, offers her love to

78 Harutyunyan 2000: 101, 111.

79 The author of the comparison Šulikatte-Slak' is J. Russell, who thinks that Slak' may be a "much-truncated form" of Šulikatte: see Russell 1993: 75. It is also possible that Slak' is directly derived from Šulikatte (**Sulək^hat^he > *Sulak'ay > Sulak' < Slak'*): see Petrosyan 2002: 31.

80 Kapantsyan 1956: 93-94, 306; Djahukian 1961: 378-379; Djahukian 1988a: 66-67.

Elkunirša's son, the weather/thunder god (West Semitic Ba'al/ Ba'lu). The thunder god "went to the headwaters of the Mala River. He went [to] Elkunirša, the husband of Ašertu, [and] entered the tent (= home) [of] Elkunirša" to inform him about this breach of faith.⁸¹ Elkunirša is the Hittite rendering of the name and epithet of the West Semitic god El: *'ēl qūnī* ('a)rša "El, creator of the earth". The Canaanite-Phoenician El, the Ugaritic Ilu, was the supreme West Semitic god, who figured under this title in other Canaanite-Amorean and Palmyran (Aramaic) texts as well.

It is this god who, in the Hebrew Bible is called "El supreme, creator of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14.19) and is identified with Yahweh (Gen. 14.22).⁸² Mala is the Hittite name for the Euphrates. In 14th-13th centuries BC, the country located in the headwaters of the Euphrates was Hayasa, and it is obvious that "El, creator of the earth" dwelling at the source of the Euphrates must have been identified with the great god of Hayasa. That is to say, the great god of Hayasa was identified with the god who in later major religions figures as the only Creator. Ašertu and then Iš-tar, mentioned in the following part of the text, are comparable to Baltaik and INANNA-Ištar (U.GUR's consort), and Ba'al, to the thunder god (or one of the thunder gods) of Hayasa.

Thus, there are some obvious features common to the Armenian and Hayasan pantheons (geographical, structural, and pertaining to figures): 1. The cults of the Armenian gods were mainly located in the territories of ancient Hayasa; 2. The number of cults in the Hayasan pantheon was comparable to the number of the Armenian gods; 3. Both pantheons were ruled by a patriarch of the gods and his female partner; 4. The supreme god was the creator of heaven and earth, and then also the lord of the other world, 5. The "eighth" gods are also identical in other respects; 6. The gods of Tarawn, too, were perhaps related to the Hayasan cults; 7. West Semitic relations are noticeable.

81 Hoffner 1990: 69.

82 Shifman 1987: 146.

Gods and Ethnogenic Patriarchs

During religious changes, old gods often descend to the lower level of epic heroes. A typical example of this phenomenon is the origin of the heroes of the *Daredevils of Sasun* from ancient local gods. The oldest Armenian myths are preserved in the oldest epic, the ethnogenic tradition.⁸³ According to this tradition, the first ancestor of the Armenians was Hayk, who killed the Babylonian tyrant Bel, founded Armenia, and became the forefather of the Armenian people. The endonym (self-appellation) of the Armenians *Hay* was believed to have been derived from Hayk (*Hayk* < *Hay-ik*, with the hypocoristic suffix *-ik* characteristic of old theonyms: cf. Astlik), whereas the exonym *armen*, from the name of Hayk's descendant Aram. The origins of Aram's son Ara the Handsome and his adversary Šamiram from the characters of the "dying and rising god" and the great mother-goddess were discussed in detail long ago.⁸⁴ Divine origins can be stated regarding the other central figures of the tradition as well.

The stories about Hayk and his seven descendants represent the Armenian historicized version of the myth of Creation. They clearly combine theogony, cosmogony, and ethnogony, and also contain anthropogonic and sociogonic elements. Hayk and his descendants are the epicized figures of the oldest Armenian gods (theogony); lands, provinces, mountains, rivers, and settlements are named after them (cosmogony: naming in mythology corresponds to the creation); Armenian ethnonyms are derived from their names (ethnogony). They are considered to be the forebears of certain aristocratic families (dynastic saga); the large family of Hayk reflects the structure of the oldest Armenian pantheon and patriarchal family (sociogony). The beginning of time is also associated with the myth of Hayk (the months and hours of the day are con-

83 For the English translation of the ethnogenic myth, see Thomson 1976: 73 ff., 357ff.

84 Matikian 1930; Kapantsyan 1944.

sidered to be named after Hayk's sons and daughters).⁸⁵ The divine line ends with the death and supposed resurrection of Ara the Handsome, the last divine patriarch. The sacred time ends with his death, and our real (profane) era begins.⁸⁶

Thus, Hayk, or, more precisely, his divine prototype, represents the creator god, the father of the oldest Armenian gods. The second eponym of the Armenians, Aram, is considered to be the "second Hayk".⁸⁷ Accordingly, Aram's adversary Baršam may be regarded as the "second Bel." Thus, in the pantheon transformed under the Iranian influence, Hayk and Aram correspond to the creator god and father of gods Aramazd. Hayk's adversary Bel is the Babylonian god Bel-Marduk, and Baršam is the abridged form of Baršamin⁸⁸ (the first element of the name Baršamin-Ba'al Šamin is etymologically identical with Bel: cf. the Semitic *b'l* "lord"). Accordingly, the name Aram might be regarded as the abridged form of Aramazd, but Hayk and Aram, the eponymous forefathers of the Armenians, are evidently older than the Iranian loan Aramazd. A detailed analysis reveals that Aram was the name of the oldest Armenian thunder god, the counterpart of Teššub.⁸⁹ Thus, it may be inferred that as a result of the assonance of names, the Iranian Ahuramazda-Aramazd was identified with the Armenian Aram. Furthermore, it is obvious that the opposition of Aram and Baršam on the divine level was to be repeated in the relationship between Aramazd and Baršamin.

In ancient Mesopotamia, planets were called by the names of gods. This custom, together with Babylonian astronomy, had also passed to

85 For Hayk, as the father of time, see Brutyan 1997: 156ff., 385ff, with bibliography.

86 Petrosyan 2002: 159ff.

87 Abeghian 1966: 55.

88 The suffix *-am* is characteristic of the names of the ethnogonic myth (Aram, Gełam). Moreover, the names of the Armenian heroes' adversaries were also abridged and rhymed with them: e.g., Šamiram (< Šamurammat) and Baršam (< Ba'alšamin).

89 Petrosyan 2002: 43 ff.

other ancient peoples.⁹⁰ In Mesopotamia, Mars was called Nergal (cf. Gk. Ares, Lat. Mars, Pers. Varahran). According to some evidence, in Armenia, it was associated with Hayk.⁹¹ If so, this witnesses to a relationship between the characters of Hayk and Nergal: the first Armenian patriarch and ancestor Hayk, who defeated Bel in battle, is obviously connected with the dead forefathers and war. Another common feature of Hayk and Nergal is noteworthy too: the large bow and the arrow were among Nergal's symbolic weapons.⁹² Hayk is also an archer who kills his enemy Bel with an arrow shot from his *laynalič* "wide-arc'd" bow (Xorenac'i I.11). Accordingly, Hayk is comparable to the great god of Hayasa U.GUR-Nergal. That god's Hayasan name is unknown. The assonance of Hayk and Hayasa makes it possible to assume an etymological relation between those names and to infer that, possibly, the early prototype of Hayk was the eponymous god of Hayasa.⁹³

The three great Armenian gods, Aramazd, Vahagn, and Mihr, can in some respects be connected with the three central heroes of the Armenian ethnogonic tradition: Hayk, Aram, and Ara the Handsome. Aramazd and Hayk are the patriarchs of the families of gods and ethnogonic heroes respectively; Aram and Vahagn are mostly warriors, while the epic heir of Mihr, Mher the Younger, and Ara are "dying and resurrecting" deities. However, these connections, as in the case of the Armenian and Urartian gods, are not simple.

Aramazd combines in himself the figures of the creator god, the father of gods, the god of thunder, and the god of the other world. The first part of his name is identical with Aram, and, therefore, Aramazd should have inevitably assumed the traits of Aram. As we have seen, that is the case: Aramazd was called "thunderous," one of the components of his complex figure originated from Teššub, and so he was in a certain respect identical with Aram.

90 Van-der-Verden 1991: 195.

91 Alishan 1895: 124.

92 RLA 9: 222.

93 Petrosyan 2002: 58, 161.

It is probable that the great god of the source of the Euphrates, the oldest predecessor of the father of gods Aramazd, was none other than the primordial figure of Hayk. The complex figure of Aramazd also included in himself the thunder god of Kummaha, i.e., the local Teššub, as well as the latter's Armenian counterpart Aram and perhaps other characters too.⁹⁴

The only known heroine of the ethnogonic tradition is Šamiram-Semiramis, who figures in the folklore of many peoples. She is usually considered a mythicized reflection of the historical queen Šammuramat, the wife of the Assyrian King Šamši-Adad V (ruled 811-808 BC). Nevertheless, she was probably of Palestinian origin, and her name was one of the epithets of the Syrian goddess Anat: *šamīm ramīm* ("high sky").⁹⁵ In Armenian folklore, Šamiram was regarded as the epicized version of Anahit and Astlik.⁹⁶ As we have seen, Nanē, too, was related to Šamiram. Thus, Šamiram seems to be the epicized version of the earliest Armenian mother goddess, whose character later split into three goddesses.

The Indo-European Legacy

As already stated above, the Song of Vahagn is considered to be a striking example of Indo-European poetry. Late manifestations of the Indo-European poetic tradition are also the fragments of preserved formulas.⁹⁷

94 Petrosyan 2006b. The hypothesis about Hayk being the eponym of Hayaša was proposed by H. Manandian: see Manandyan 1984: 557 ff. According to G. Kapantsyan, the Hayašan U.GUR is associated with the Armenian Ara the Handsome: see Kapantsyan 1956: 89.

95 Weinfeld 1991.

96 For the connections between Šamiram and Armenian goddesses, see especially Abeghian VII: 156-162:

97 Harutyunyan 1987: 50, 53. Cf. e.g. the probable figura etymologica in the formula *ari ararič* "brave/manly creator" (Aramazd) (Agat'angelos 68). *Ari* represents, probably, a conflation (cf. **aryo-* "lord, master" and **Hner-* "man"), thus *ari Aramazd* is comparable with the Luwian *ariyaddalis* ^D*IM-anza* (thunder god) and Greek *areios Zeus*, see Petrosyan 2002: 131; for the Luwian and Greek for-

The characteristics of Armenian gods are comparable with the three Dumézilian "functions" of Indo-European mythology: sovereignty, war, and fertility. Aramazd is the sovereign of the gods, Vahagn is the god of war and valor, and Mihr's epic heir Mher the Younger will be reborn when the world becomes more fertile. The central personages of the Armenian ethnogonic tradition – Hayk, Aram, and Ara the Handsome – the epicized figures of primordial Armenian gods, as demonstrated by S. Ahyan and G. Dumézil, represent the same functions respectively.⁹⁸ Other Indo-European associations, too, can be revealed in the Armenian ethnogonic tradition.⁹⁹

As mentioned above, the cemetery of the Armenian kings was in Ani-Kamax, Aramazd's cult center. On the other hand, Gregory the Illuminator and his successors were buried in T'ordan, close to Ani-Kamax, in the cult center of Baršamin (Xorenac'i II.91; III.11, 14). Probably, this division continued the old pagan tradition dividing secular and religious powers between these two gods. Thus, they could have represented the royal and the priestly aspects of Dumézil's first function. It is interesting that the priestly function is connected with a god bearing a Semitic name. The word *k'urm* "priest," too, is of Semitic origin, which fact can give some basis for corresponding suppositions about certain Semitic relations of the Armenian priesthood.

Comparatively recently, one more, the "fourth function," has been searched for in Indo-European mythology, focused on "otherness" and related to the realm of death.¹⁰⁰ Tir, the pagan predecessor of the angel of death, quite fits this role.

Anahit, Nanē, and Astlik were identified with the Greek Artemis, Athena, and Aphrodite respectively. Anahit, as the great mother-goddess and wife of Aramazd, may be associated with the first function;

mulas: Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1984: 755, n. 1; Kazanas 2001: 277.

98 Ahyan 1982 ; Dumézil 1994: 133-141.

99 Petrosyan 2002; Petrosyan 2007a: 30-31; Petrosyan 2007b.

100 Allen 1987; Allen 1996 etc.

Athena was the goddess of war (second function); while Aphrodite was the goddess of love and fertility (third function) (cf. Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite).¹⁰¹ So, these three can be regarded as the three hypostases of the Indo-European "transfunctional" goddess.

The Interrelation of the Armenian and Iranian Religions

There are strong foreign influences over many of the ancient religious and mythological systems of the world (e.g., Akkadian, Hittite, Greek, Roman, etc.). The foreign, especially Iranian, influence on the Armenian heathen religion, too, is obvious. According to Strabo (XI.4.16), the Armenians worshipped the gods of the Persians and performed all their rites (by "Persians," perhaps the ethnic element dominating in Iran at that time, the Parthians, are meant). And this was before the Arsacids ascended the Armenian throne, although it is well-known that the greatest Iranian influence upon the Armenian language and culture goes back to the Arsacid period.

Already from the Achaemenian epoch, the Armenian kings and princes bore Iranian names of religious nature, and later, the same was true with the Artaxiads and Arsacids. Already in the Achaemenian epoch, the Armenian religion must have undergone Iranian influence. Since the Artaxiads were hellenophiles, they probably became the apologists of the hellenization of the Armenian gods. The Parthian Arsacids, after coming into possession of the Armenian throne, undoubtedly contributed to the Iranian influence. Thus, it was the Armenian ruling elite that furthered the Iranian and Greek influences over the Armenian religion. On the other hand, however, there was the influence of "lower," popular beliefs on the religion of the ruling class. Even the kings of the Arsacid dynasty in Armenia adopted some local traditions.

Besides theonyms, many important Armenian terms pertaining to

101 For a similar functional interpretation of the triad Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, see Dumézil 1968: 580-586.

religion and beliefs are of Iranian origin, and some of them passed into Christianity.¹⁰² It is obvious that together with theonyms and religious terms, certain Iranian religious ideas were also borrowed. Nevertheless, the differences between the Armenian and Iranian religions were of systematic character, and the Armenian religion could not be regarded as merely a local manifestation of Zoroastrianism. Polytheism was characteristic of the Armenian religion, and the pantheon was organized in accordance with the "family principle." Idolatry was specific, and the Armenian priests were absolutely different from the Iranian magi. Finally, there was no antipode of Ahura Mazda, which is a radical difference from Zoroastrianism. These facts were already noted by H. Gelzer, A. Meillet, H. Tashyan, A. Matikian, G. Kapantsyan, K. Trever, G. Sarg-syan, et al. Moreover, some Armenian-Iranian shared features are typological, while others came from the Ancient Eastern cultural substratum and common Indo-European heritage.

The goal of the present study was to demonstrate that, in the Armenian pantheon, the old local cults continued to exist under their new, mainly Iranian, names. The introduction of Iranian theonyms into the Armenian religion took place in the same way as in other cases of religious influences: cults with new names were applied to existing old cults, which were brought to some correspondence with them. As a result of that transmission, the old figures were in fact just renamed, preserving their old characteristics. The former structure of the pantheon was also preserved, in most cases, thanks to the location of the cults with new names in old places of worship.

Thus, the Iranian influence on the Armenian pre-Christian religion and pantheon was in fact weaker than it has been supposed, and it was mainly expressed in religious terms and theonyms. Let us recall that reli-

102 For example, *bagin* "altar," *zoh* "sacrifice," *paštem* "to worship," *xostovanem* "to confess," *ōrhnem* "to bless," *nzovem* "to anathematize," *draxt* "paradise," *džoxk* "hell," *hreštak* "angel," *dew* "demon," *hmayem* "to bewitch," *kaxard* "witch," *margarē* "prophet," *hrašk* "miracle," *hreš* "monster," etc.: see Djahukian 1987: 576.

gious transformations may be regarded as "terminological and onomastic revolutions." Such a "revolution" took place in Armenia under the Iranian influence (there was also the Hellenistic, weaker, influence, only on an onomastic level). Those influences did not considerably transform the steady features of the old pantheon: its structure, the geography of cults, and the functional characteristics of gods.